TL 5015

amnesty international australia

media release ***29 April 1999***

Indonesian Army must prevent looming bloodshed in Dili

Amnesty International is extremely concerned about a written threat issued by paramilitary group 'Red Blood' (Darah Merah) to 'cleanse' Dili of pro-independence supporters over the weekend and is calling on the Indonesian government to take immediate action to disarm and disband militias before it is too late.

"Previous attacks by paramilitary groups were preceded by similar threats which ABRI also took no action on. The Indonesian government can no longer afford to stand by and watch as innocent civilians are being harassed and killed by the thugs they have armed," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International yesterday issued a worldwide alert on the intimidation of human rights activists from the leading human rights and refugee workers in Dili. Following a meeting with visiting British minister Derek Fatchett, paramilitary and military personnel twice threatened the offices of leading human rights group Yayasan HAK by attempting to enter the premises and terrifying the staff.

"Meanwhile in the town of Suai, at least nine people have disappeared since April 11 after being detained by a paramilitary group and up to 18 people are feared dead while hundreds of members of the paramilitary group are reportedly roaming the streets," Amnesty said.

"While moves towards a political settlement in East Timor are welcome, the Australian government must pressure the Indonesian government to protect East Timorese now before the situation gets more out of control and more lives are lost."

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